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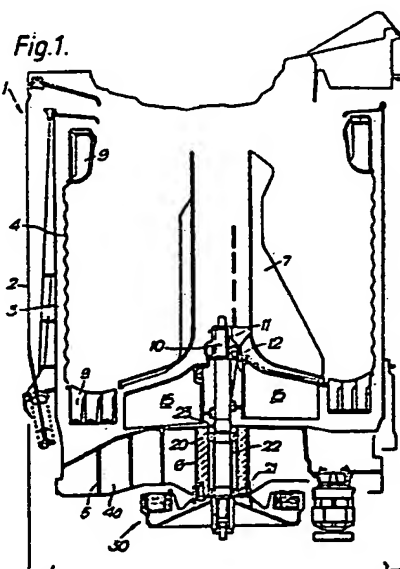
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(54) Improvements in or relating to machine drives and/or methods of making the same.

(57) An electric motor (30) stator (31) and rotor (51 to 55) are made by holding magnetic elements (32, 53) thereof in position in dies (25; 66 to 69) and injecting a plastics material into the dies to provide bearing carrier mountings (27, 51) substantially concentric with the pole faces (33) of the stator (31) and poles (53) of the rotor. The motor is completed by providing a bearing (21) in the stator bearing carrier mounting (27) and a shaft (13) in the rotor bearing carrier mounting (51), the shaft running also in a further bearing mounting tube (8). The motor and drive so made is mounted to drive an agitator (7) and spin tub (4) of a laundry machine (1).



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Improvements In or Relating to Machine Drives and/or Methods of Making the Same

This invention relates to electric motors and/or machine drives utilizing such motors and/or methods of making the same and has been devised particularly though not solely for use as a source of power and/or drive for a laundry machine.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an electric motor and/or a machine drive utilizing such a motor and/or a method of making the same which will at least provide the public with a useful choice.

Accordingly in one aspect the invention consists in a method of manufacturing a motor element of an electric motor said motor element being selected from a rotor having a ferromagnetic circuit spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means and a stator having a ferromagnetic circuit including a set of poles adapted to receive electrical windings thereon, said poles being spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means thereof said method comprising the steps of fixing the selected ferromagnetic circuit in a plastics injection moulding die, said die having walls defining a cavity to receive injection moulded plastics material, said walls including wall portions to define a part of the cavity into which plastics material is injected to form the appropriate selected shaft carrier mounting means and injecting a plastics material into said die; to provide a plastics moulding having embedded therein said ferromagnetic circuit; to form said shaft carrier mounting means and to form a web between said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means said die holding desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit in a fixed radial disposition relative to said shaft carrier mounting means to maintain substantial concentricity between said desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means.

In a further aspect the invention consists in a method of manufacturing an electric motor comprising the steps of taking a motor element comprising a stator made by a method according to the preceding paragraph, placing electrical windings on the poles thereof and taking a further motor element comprising a rotor made according to the preceding paragraph magnetizing part of said ferromagnetic circuit to a permanent magnet state, attaching said stator to a bearing housing containing a distal bearing separated from a proximal bearing the outer surface of said proximal bearing being mounted partly in said shaft carrier mounting, mounting a shaft in said bearings and mounting said rotor on said shaft so that on the windings on said stator being energized through an electronic commutation circuit occurs to cause said rotor to rotate.

In a further aspect the invention consists in a motor element of an electric motor said motor element being selected from a rotor having a ferromagnetic circuit spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means thereof and a stator having a ferromagnetic circuit including a set of poles adapted to receive electrical windings thereon said poles being spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means thereof said motor element comprising a plastics injection moulding having embedded therein parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and having a web connecting said ferromagnetic circuit to said shaft carrier mounting means with parts of said ferromagnetic circuit held in a fixed radial disposition relative to said shaft carrier mounting means to maintain substantial concentricity between said desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means.

In a still further aspect the invention consists in an electric motor comprising a motor element comprising a stator according to the preceding paragraph, said stator having electrical windings on the poles thereof and further motor element comprising a rotor made according to the preceding paragraph said motor having some of said ferromagnetic circuit magnetized to a permanent magnet state, a bearing housing attached to said stator, said housing containing a distal bearing separated from a proximal bearing, the outer surface of said proximal bearing being mounted partly in said bearing housing and partly in said shaft carrier mounting, a shaft in said bearings and said rotor being mounted on said shaft so that on windings on the poles of said stator being energized through an electronic commutating circuit magnetic coupling occurs to cause said rotor to rotate.

In a still further aspect the invention consists in a laundry machine having an outer casing, a water container within said casing, a spin tub rotatable within said container, an agitator mounted for agitation within said spin tub, said agitator being operable to enable said agitator alone to be agitated backwards and forwards or said spin tub and said agitator to be rotated in a single direction and spinning speed, said agitator being driven by an electric motor according to the preceding paragraph, said shaft driving said agitator and said bearing housing being fixed to a lower part of said container.

To those skilled in the art to which the invention relates, many changes in construction and widely differing embodiments and applications of the invention will suggest themselves without departing from the scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. The disclosures and the

descriptions herein are purely illustrative and are not intended to be in any sense limiting.

The invention consists in the foregoing and also envisages constructions of which the following gives examples only.

One preferred form of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which;

Figure 1 is a diagrammatic cross section of a laundry machine constructed according to the invention.

Figure 2 is an enlarged diagram of the drive mechanism forming part of the laundry machine of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is a plan view of a stator forming part of an electric motor also shown in figures 1 and 2.

Figure 4 is a cross section of an assembled die containing cavities in which a stator according to the invention is moulded.

Figure 5 is a plan view of a part of the die shown in Figure 4 and

Figure 6 is a cross section of an assembled die containing cavities in which a rotor according to the invention is moulded.

Referring to the drawings a laundry machine 1 is provided having an outer casing 2 and a container 3 which in use contains water in which clothes are to be laundered.

The container 3 is preferably an injection moulding of a plastics material having reinforcing ribs 4 and 5. The ribs 4a and 5 support a bearing tube 6 preferably having a metal e.g. an aluminium alloy extrusion liner 8 moulded in the tube 6 when the container 3 is being injection moulded. The liner 8 is preferably shaped in plan to provide four wings into which motor mounting screws 65 extend. Mounted within the container 3 is a spin tub 4 having balancing rings 9 and mounted within the spin tub is an agitator 7. The agitator is mounted on and driven by a shaft 10 the driving being effected by splines 11 engaging corresponding parts 12 of the agitator. The described laundry machine also includes a clutch arrangement operated by a float 15 which is shown in a lower engaging position on the left hand side of the drawing and an upper disengaged position as shown in the right hand side. The operation of this float in connecting and disconnecting the spin tub 4 from the agitator 7 is fully described in European Patent Specification No. 7301868.3 which specification is incorporated herein by reference.

The shaft 13 is mounted in an upper distal bearing 20 (Figure 2) and a lower proximal bearing 21. The upper bearing 20 is mounted within the bearing tube 6 and the two bearings are separated by spacers 19 and 22. A seal 23 of known form is provided to seal the shaft 13 from the bearing tube

6.

The drive mechanism of the laundry machine above described includes an electric motor generally referenced 30 which in the preferred form is an inside out salient pole electronically commutated motor (herein referred to as an ECM). The ECM 30 is constructed according to the invention as follows:

A ferromagnetic magnetisable member 31 (Figure 3) is provided having salient poles 32, the poles 32 extending outwardly from a yoke 29 and the poles 32 having pole faces 33 lying on an outer circumference. The stator member 31 is manufactured by punching the poles 32 and yoke 29 out of a strip of electrical steel having a lightly insulated surface and then curving the strip of steel on edge into a continuous helix arranged with adjacent coils of steel having the light insulation thereon touching. The continuous helix is wound so that the resulting ferromagnetic magnetisable member has an outside diameter which is slightly larger than the preferred outside diameter of the stator member 31 in its completed form. The adjacent coils of steel are riveted together to maintain the desired shape. The plan shape is shown in Figure 3.

To provide a frame for the stator the stator member 31 is fitted in a space 24 of die 25 (Figure 4) with the pole faces 33 a close fit against a face 28 of a part of the die. The outside diameter of stator member 31 is shaped precisely by three sliding cones 71, spaced 120° apart, which move radially toward the centre of bearing mounting 27 (Figure 5). A plastics material preferably a Dupont Rynite FR543 plastics material is injected to encase the stator member 31 with the exception of the pole faces 33 in the plastics material. The position of the pole faces 33 is accurately determined by angled pins (not shown) and the poles 32 are mounted over shaped portions 26 of the die as may be seen in Figure 5. The die also includes provision to provide a shaft carrier mounting comprising a bearing mounting 27 in which the bearing 21 is later fitted to carry the shaft 11. The die 25 has shaped cavities 37, 38, 39 and otherwise to provide the shape of the stator frame as may be seen in Figure 2.

Referring now to that figure, the web 41 of the stator frame connects the plastics moulded section 36 to the bearing mounting 27. The web 41 has an annular shape containing a V shape 42 between a frustum of a cone portion 47 directed in one direction to a further frustum of a cone portion 48 directed away from the annular V shape 42 between the two portions 47 and 48. This shape has been found satisfactory in that after the plastics material has been injected any changes in volume thereof due to contraction of the plastics material while cooling result in changes of shape, for exam-

ple. of the V shape 42 or change of angle between the portions 47 and 48 rather than varying the relative position of the bearing mounting 27 and the encasement 36 which encases the stator member 31 which in particular is fixed in position by the engagement of the pole faces 33 with the die face 28. The injection moulding also covers the pole pieces except the faces thereof with the plastics material giving electrical insulation 45 to such pole pieces. At a later stage, a protective coating is applied to the pole faces eg. by spraying.

The moulding produced also provides terminal sockets 46. When the poles are wound the winding machinery places tails of winding wires automatically in the terminal sockets 46 and external wiring connections of spade type are then inserted in the sockets 46 giving a scraping action on the winding wires placed in the sockets 46, the insertion baring the tails of those wires and making electrical connection as desired.

To provide a rotor for the motor having a plastics rotor web and hub, a die is provided, and that die includes removeable members 66 and 67 (Figure 6) which fits in a further die part 68 and associated with the die parts 66 and 67 is a further male die part 69.

In use a series of pieces of magnetisable material (herein referred to as magnets) are placed in an unmagnetised condition in position in prepared slots (not shown) in the removable piece 67 and one such magnet is shown at 53 in Figure 6. The magnets are later magnetized in a separate process to be permanently magnetized in the known way. The material is preferably of the Neodymium type. The magnets are held in place by friction, being a reasonably tight fit in the slots or otherwise held temporarily in position and a strip of lightly insulated ferromagnetic material (steel) is then wound into a spiral coil in a clock spring manner over the magnets and in contact therewith until a suitable thickness is built up. The steel is shown at 54 in Figures 2 and 6. In order to resist forces acting during cooling of plastics web and hub the rotor after moulding, adjacent turns of the steel are fixed to each other preferably by the use of a suitable adhesive such as Loctite 290. The magnets are then held in a fixed position on the face of the removable die member 67 and the steel 54 is locked into a substantially solid form by the adhesive with the inner surfaces of the magnets each maintained in a circumferential position. The die parts are then assembled with the part 67 carrying the steel 54 and magnets 53 in position as shown in Figure 6. A plastics material preferably Rynite 545 made by Dupont is injected into the closed die parts.

In the preferred form for injection moulding both the stator and the rotor, the plastics material is

injected at 290°-300°C into the die parts which are maintained at 110°C. After injection, the die remains closed for about 15 seconds and the male and female die parts then separated. Ejection pins then eject the moulded part almost immediately. The plastics material encases the steel and all of the surfaces of the magnets except the face in contact with the die surface.

In the finished rotor, the web injected into space 58 of the die interconnects the encased steel 54 and magnets 53 to hub 51. The web 52 is formed to a shape such and the fixing of the steel and the magnets in the die is such that distortion of the position of the hub relative to the magnets and particularly concentricity are controlled during cooling of the plastics material to die temperature, we have found that an extended frustum of a cone shape of the portion 52 passing through an annular change of direction of the base of an annular 55 V from the cylindrical portion 57 to the plastics material 43 encasing the magnets and steel has been found satisfactory in this respect. Thus the web 52 is formed to a shape which resists distortion of the portion of the hub relative to the permanent magnets and we have found that a cone shape changing through a V shape to a cylinder is satisfactory in this respect.

Referring again to Figure 2 the hub 51 is held in place on the shaft 11 by a screwed cap 56. A useful adjunct to the invention is the provision of a downwardly directed short cylinder 60 on the stator member 52 and this co-acts with an upstanding cylindrical member 61 on the rotor so that should the seal 23 leak water will pass downwardly to be expelled through apertures 62 in the rotor.

The number of poles in the stator and the rotor may be varied but for example for a 42 pole stator 56 permanent magnets are spaced equi-distantly on the rotor.

The lower end of the shaft 11 has a splined portion 50 and the hub 51 of the rotor is mounted on this splined portion.

During assembly the bearing 21 is placed with its outer race partly in the bearing mounting 27 and partly in the extruded liner 8.

The above construction has the advantage that an electric motor may be made by a plastics injection process in which in particular the bearing 21 maintains its concentricity relative to the pole faces 33 and thus enables a motor to be produced very quickly and very easily. Also the mounting of the tube 6 in the injection moulding of the outer container 3 enables the shaft 11 to be mounted quickly and readily. The whole arrangement has the advantage that the motor may be dismantled quickly and easily by undoing the cap 56, removing the rotor and then undoing screws 65 so that the motor may be dropped from the tube 6. The

shaft may then be withdrawn and the bearings replaced if necessary.

Although the preferred form of the invention has been described in relation to a laundry machine in which the shaft 11 drives an agitator it will be apparent that the invention particularly though not solely the method of manufacturing the motor frame will be applicable to other drives where a pair of bearings rotatably support not only the motor rotor but also a rotatable part of a machine of which the motor and drive form parts.

The features disclosed in the foregoing description, in the following claims and/or in the accompanying drawings may, both separately and in any combination thereof, be material for realising the invention in diverse forms thereof.

Claims

1. A method of manufacturing a motor element of an electric motor (30) said motor element being selected from a rotor (51 to 55) having a ferromagnetic circuit (53, 54) spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means (51) thereof and a stator (31) having a ferromagnetic circuit (29, 32) including a set of poles (32) adapted to receive electrical windings thereon said poles being spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means (27) thereof said method comprising the steps of fixing the selected ferromagnetic circuit in a plastics injection moulding die (25; 66 to 69), said die having walls defining a cavity (37 to 39; 57, 58) to receive injection moulded plastics material, said walls including wall portions to define a part of the cavity into which plastics material is injected to form the appropriate selected shaft carrier mounting, and injecting a plastics material into said die to provide a plastics moulding to have embedded therein the selected ferromagnetic circuit; to form said shaft carrier mounting means; and to form a web (41, 52) between said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means, said die holding desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit in a fixed radial disposition relative to said shaft carrier mounting means to maintain substantial concentricity between said desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means after cooling of said plastics material.

2. A method as claimed in claim 1 which includes the step of selecting said stator (31) as said motor element.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2 which includes the step of providing said shaft carrier mounting means (27, 51) as a housing adapted in use to receive a shaft (13) carrying bearing (21).

4. A method as claimed in either of claim 2 or claim 3 which includes the step of forming said

web (41, 52) in a shape which includes members which form an annular V formation (42, 55) positioned so that contraction of said plastics material during cooling after injection causes a change in shape of said V formation.

5. A method as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 4 which includes the step of forming terminal sockets (46) in said plastics moulding.

6. A method as claimed in any one of claims 2 to 5 which includes the step of forming said ferromagnetic circuit as a yoke (29) having associated therewith a plurality of outwardly directed poles (32) with the pole faces (33) of the poles laying on a circumference.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6 which includes the step of forming said poles (32) and said yoke (29) integrally from a strip of ferromagnetic material and curving the strip edgewise to form said yoke with outwardly extending poles.

8. A method as claimed in claim 1 which includes the step of selecting said rotor (51 to 55) as said motor element.

9. A method as claimed in claim 8 which includes the steps of providing said shaft carrying mounting means (27, 51) as a hub in which a shaft (13) is mounted in use.

10. A method as claimed in claim 8 or claim 9 which includes the step of forming said web (41, 52) in a shape which includes members (47, 48, 52, 55) which form an annular V formation positioned so that contraction of said plastics material during cooling after injection causes a change in shape of said V formation.

11. A method as claimed in any one of claims 8 to 10 which includes the step of forming said rotor (51 to 55) with 30 pieces of inwardly facing magnetisable material (53) magnetisable to form permanent magnet poles.

12. A method as claimed in claim 11 which includes the step of mounting said pieces of magnetisable material (53) so as to be retained in slots in a removeable piece (67) of said die, wrapping a strip of ferromagnetic material (54) about said pieces of magnetisable material on said said pieces of magnetisable material on said removeable die piece to provide a desired thickness, rigidifying the assembly and placing the removeable die pieces with the ferromagnetic assembly (54) thereon in association with the die parts (66 to 69) before injecting said plastics material.

13. A method as claimed in claim 12 which includes the step of rigidifying said ferromagnetic assembly (54) by applying a gap penetrating adhesive thereto.

14. A method of manufacturing an electric motor comprising the steps of taking a motor element comprising a stator (31) made by a method according to any one of claims 2 to 7, placing electrical

windings on the poles (32) thereof and taking a motor element comprising a rotor (51 to 55) made according to any one of claims 8 to 13, magnetizing part of said ferromagnetic circuit to a permanent magnet state, attaching said stator to a bearing housing (8) containing a distal bearing (20) separated from a proximal bearing (21) the outer surface of said proximal bearing being mounted partly in said shaft carrier mounting (27), mounting a shaft (13) in said bearings and mounting said rotor on said shaft so that on the windings on said stator being energized through an electronic commutation circuit magnetic coupling occurs to cause said rotor to rotate.

15. A motor element of an electric motor (30) said motor element being selected from a rotor (51 to 55) having a ferromagnetic circuit spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means (51) thereof and a stator (31) having a ferromagnetic circuit including a set of poles (32) adapted to receive electrical windings thereon said poles being spaced radially from a shaft carrier mounting means (27) thereof said motor element comprising a plastics injection moulding having embedded therein parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and having a web (41, 52) connecting said ferromagnetic circuit to said shaft carrier mounting means with parts of said ferromagnetic circuit held in a fixed radial disposition relative to said shaft carrier mounting means to maintain substantial concentricity between said desired parts of said ferromagnetic circuit and said shaft carrier mounting means.

16. A motor element as claimed in claim 15 which includes said stator (31) as said motor element.

17. A motor element as claimed in claim 16 wherein said shaft carrier mounting means (27, 52) is provided as a housing adapted in use to receive a part of shaft (13) carrying a bearing (21).

18. A motor element as claimed in claim 16 or claim 17 wherein said web (41, 52) is formed in a shape which includes members which form an annular V formation (42, 55) positioned so that contraction of said plastics material during cooling after injection causes a change in shape of said V formation.

19. A motor element as claimed in any one of claims 16 to 18 wherein said ferromagnetic circuit is formed as a yoke (29) having associated therewith a plurality of outwardly directed poles (32) with the outer faces (33) of the poles lying on a circumference.

20. A motor element as claimed in any one of the claims 16 to 19 wherein said poles (32) and said yoke (29) are formed integrally from a strip of ferromagnetic material and the strip is curved edgewise to form said yoke with outwardly extending poles.

21. A motor element as claimed in claim 15 wherein said rotor (51 to 55) is selected as said motor element.

22. A motor element as claimed in claim 21 wherein said shaft carrier mounting means is provided as a hub (51) in which a shaft (13) is mounted in use.

23. A motor element as claimed in claim 21 or claim 22 wherein said rotor web (52) is formed in a shape which includes members which provide an annular V formation (55) positioned so that contraction of said plastics material during cooling after injection causes a change in shape of said V formation.

24. A motor element as claimed in any one of claims 21 to 23 wherein said rotor (51 to 55) is formed with pieces of inwardly facing magnetic material (53) magnetisable to form permanent magnet poles.

25. A motor element as claimed in claim 24 wherein said pieces of inwardly facing magnetic material (53) are wrapped in a strip of ferromagnetic material (54) to a desired thickness and the assembly is rigidified.

26. A motor element as claimed in claim 25 wherein said assembly is rigidified by a gap penetrating adhesive between parts thereof.

27. An electric motor comprising a motor element comprising a stator (31) according to any one of claims 15 to 20, said stator having electrical windings on the poles (32) thereof and a further motor element comprising a rotor (51 to 55) made according to any one of claims 21 to 26 having some of said ferromagnetic circuit magnetized to a permanent magnet state, a bearing housing (8) attached to said stator (31), said housing containing a distal bearing (20) separated from a proximal bearing (21), the outer surface of said proximal bearing being mounted partly in said bearing housing and partly in said shaft carrier mounting (27), said bearings and said rotor being mounted on said shaft so that on windings on said stator being energized through an electronic commutating circuit, magnetic coupling occurs to cause said rotor to rotate.

28. A laundry machine (1) having an outer casing (2), a water container (3) within said casing, a spin tub (4) rotatable within said container, an agitator (7) mounted for agitation within said spin tub interconnecting means between said spin tub, and said agitator being operable to enable said agitator alone to be agitated backwards and forwards or said spin tub and said agitator to be rotated in a single direction and spinning speed, said agitator being driven by an electric motor (30) according to claim 27, said shaft (13) driving said agitator and said bearing housing being fixed to a lower part of said container.

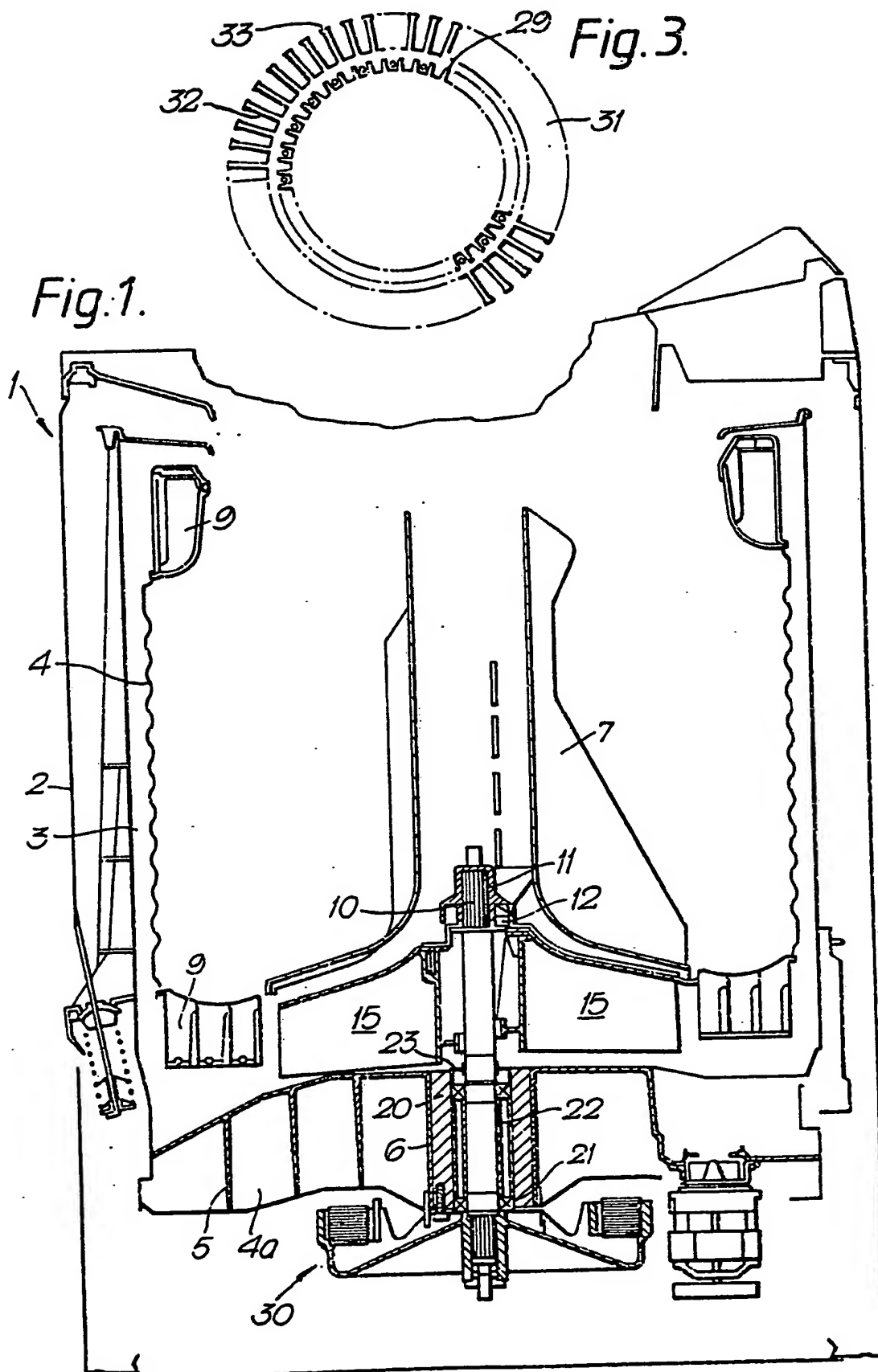


Fig. 2.

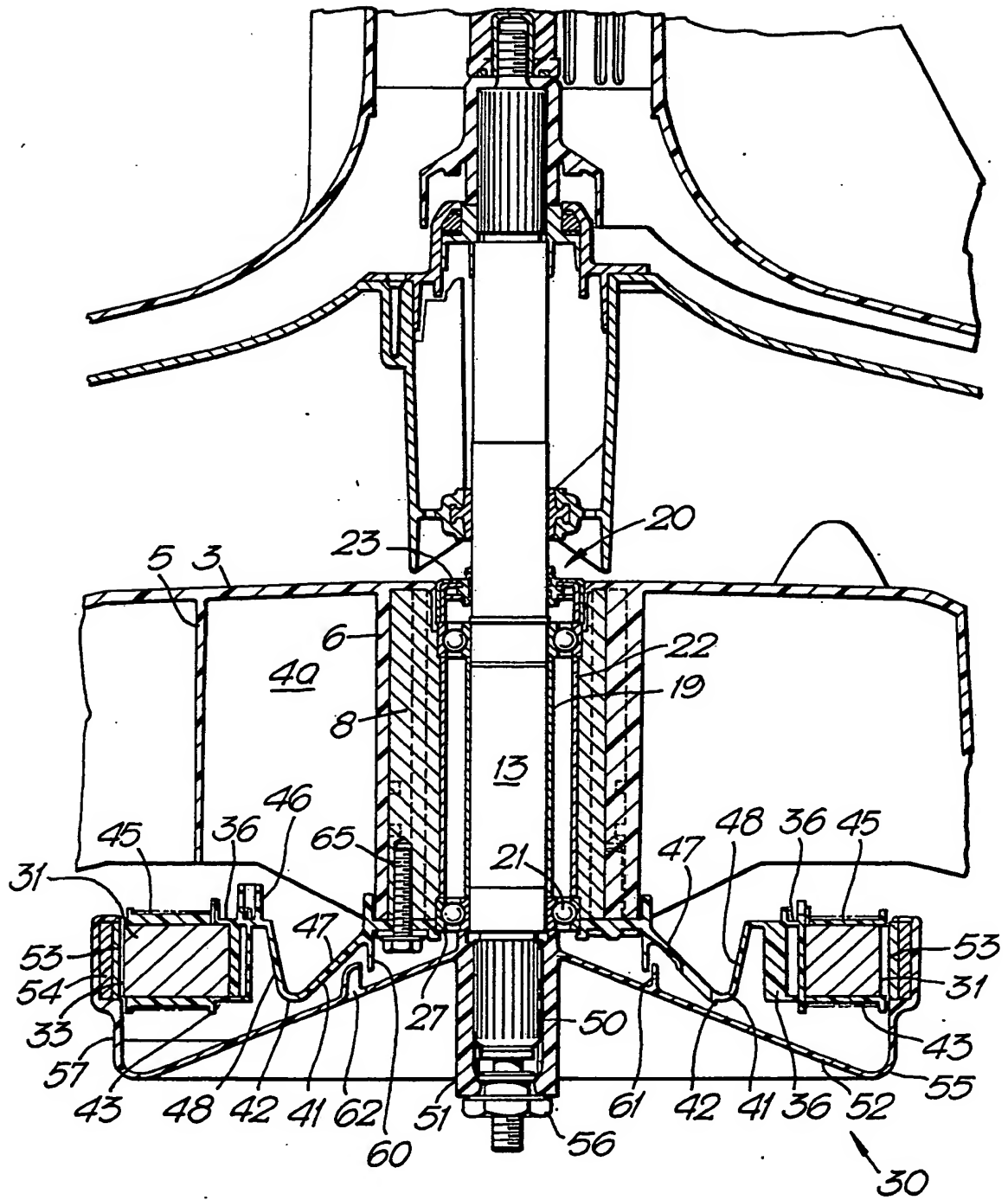


Fig. 4.

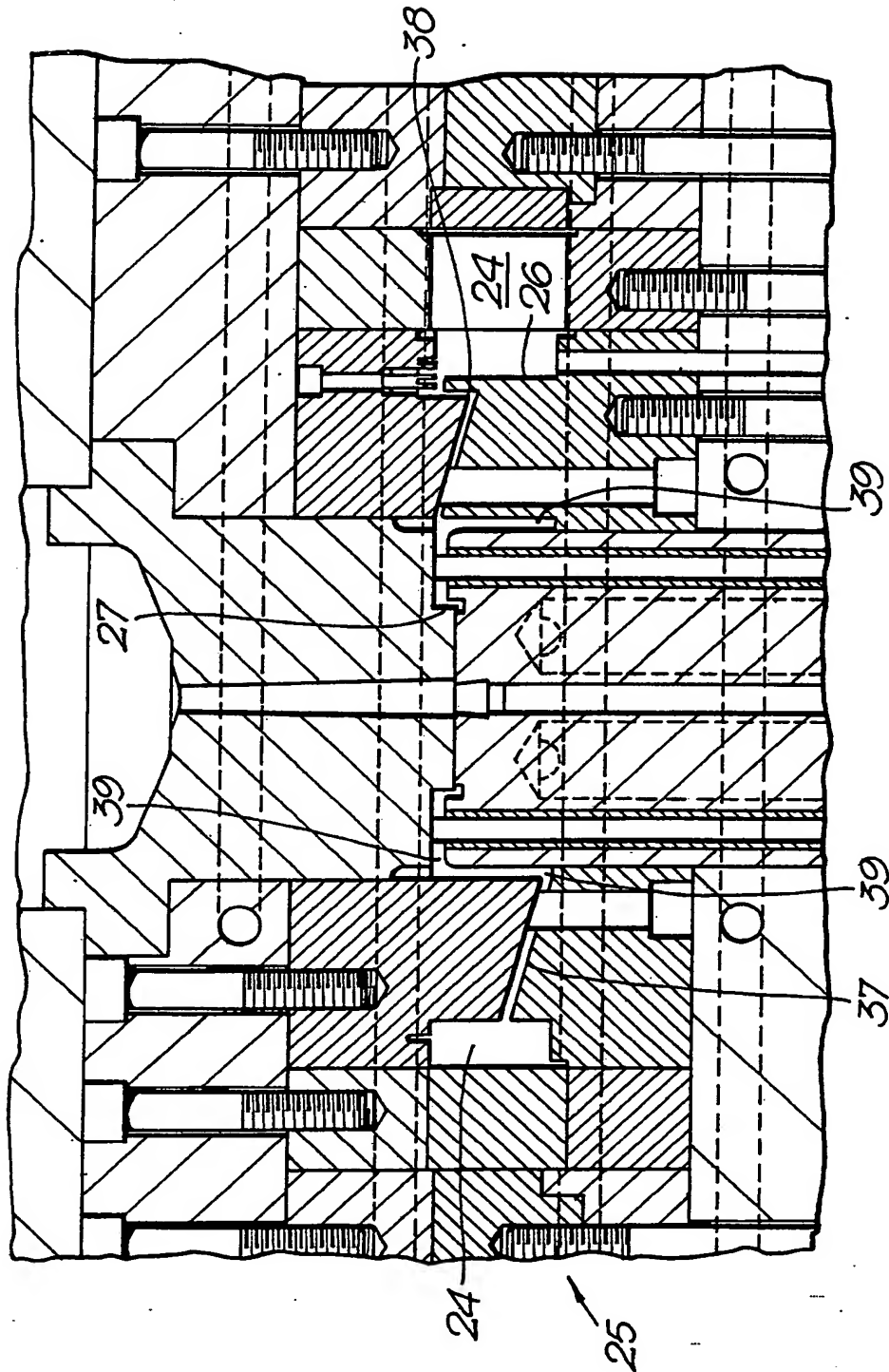


Fig.5.

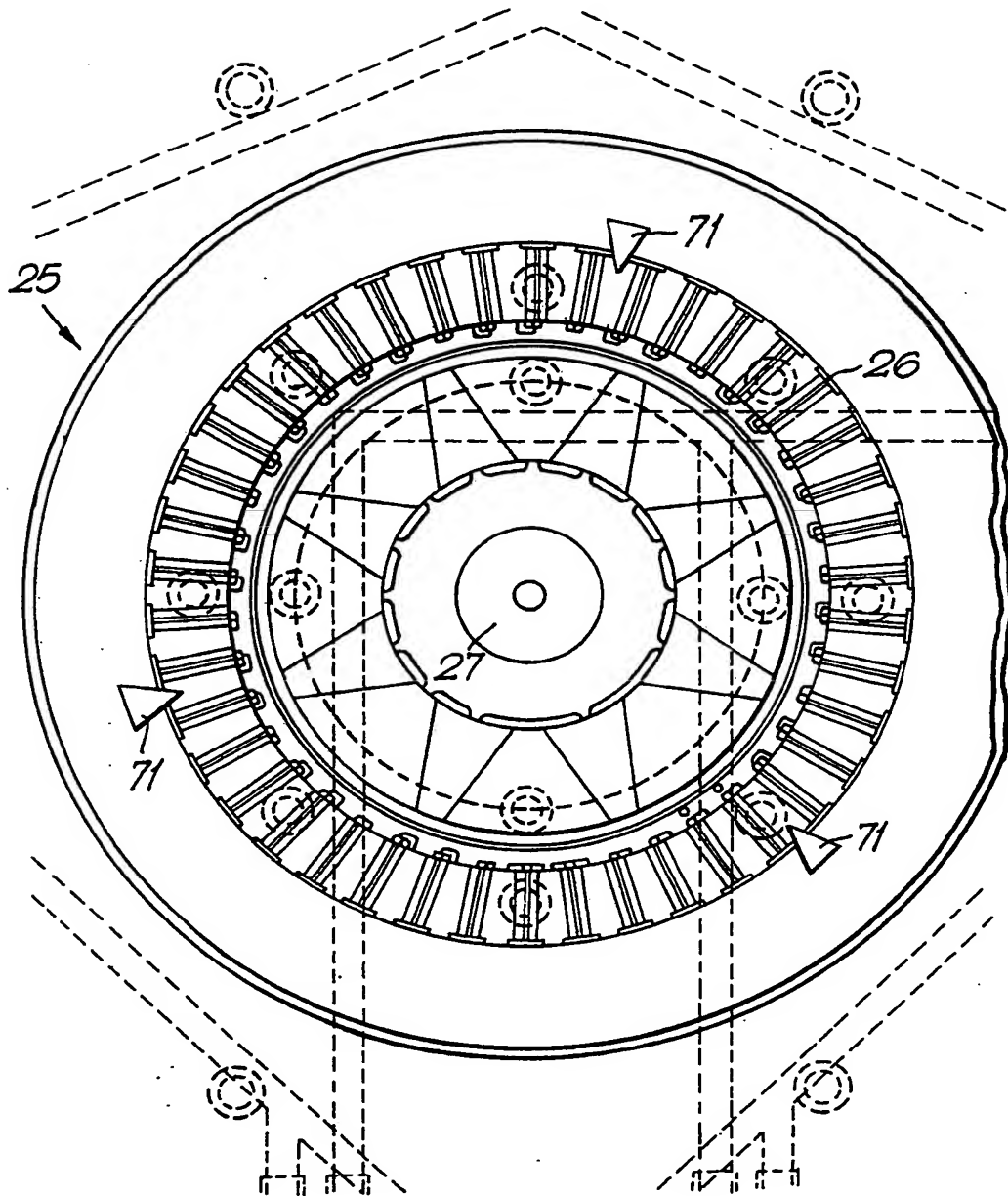


Fig. 6.

